THE PLACE OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGION IN THEOLOGICAL STUDY.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD,

ON THE

OPENING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR,

OCTOBER 14th, 1890,

BY

J. ESTLIN CARPENTER, M.A.

"The College adheres to its original principle of freely imparting Theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular Theological doctrines."

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,

When Confucius visited the court of Chow, the seat of the imperial dynasty, he took occasion to make a special examination of all the arrangements for the great sacrifices to Heaven and Earth; he surveyed the ancestral temples in which the imperial worship was offered; he inspected the Hall of Light, whose walls bore paintings of the emperors from the remotest times; and then he turned to his disciples with the remark—'As we use a glass to examine the forms of things, so 'must we study the past to understand the present.'[1]

In the midst of the University of Oxford, it may seem unnecessary to give fresh emphasis or illustration to the principle of the Chinese sage. Is not the historical method pursued on every side of us? Is it not applied in almost all departments of our activity? Language and literature, philosophy and art, law, government, society itself, have they not all come under its spell? There is scarcely an institution or an idea whose beginnings have not been investigated, and whose phases of development have not been traced. Is it not plain, then, that the ideas and institutions of religion cannot be exempt? They are among the most potent products of human thought and aspiration; they have exerted the widest influence in promoting or retarding the progress of nations; they have contributed above all others to the happiness and to the moral education of the race.

[1] Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. i., p. 65.

Within certain limits, indeed, the historical study of religion enters into the training of every one who seeks to enter the Christian ministry by the path of knowledge. The philosopher may be content to examine the roots of belief within his breast, and discover the way to the interpretation of the universe through the processes of his own mind; and the missionary of social reform may find the inspiration of his teaching in the 'demonstration of the spirit' made manifest by the victory of purity and righteousness in lives that had been torn by passion and sunk in infamy. But he who desires a place in one of the religious organisations which he finds around him, is soon aware that he cannot define its aims, or understand its genius, or share its life, without an acquaintance with its rise and growth, and a sympathetic comprehension of its relations to other branches of the great church of God. The history of Christianity, then, must always constitute a part of all theological equipment; and though it is often related under dogmatic assumptions which treat all departures from a fixed standard of faith as guilty aberrations, yet its true significance is becoming more and more clearly understood, as it is recognised that its chief doctrines have emerged into their present forms through periods of struggle in which they have incorporated elements diverse and remote. Nay, the great book of our religion challenges us at once to similar study by concentrating within its pages the literature of a thousand years. It insists on carrying you back from the New Testament to the Old: and you cannot interpret the ideas of the prophet of Nazareth unless you are familiar with the hopes of his predecessors centuries before. Nor does the range of enquiry stop there, for what were the antecedents of Isaiah or Moses? There was a fountain at Capernaum, so Josephus tells us, which was popularly supposed to be fed from the waters of the Nile.[1]

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[1] *B. J.*, iii. 10, 8.

His geography and his physics may be at fault; but we may accept his statement as a symbol, if not as a fact; for the streams of Hebrew thought were fed from many lands, nor are Egypt and Babylonia the only countries whose culture is reflected in the antique documents of our faith. How fully this is recognised by some of the distinguished teachers of this University, I need not say to those of you who have attended their courses on the writings and the theology of the Old Testament. So far, then, we are in accord here with the programmes of study through which all must pass, who aspire after the 'ministry of the word.' Our methods may be sometimes different, our results may vary, our estimates of the same facts may traverse accepted judgments, but our aim is still one, the pursuit of religious truth; and for the comprehension of the religious world around us we employ a common instrument,—to understand the present we investigate the past.

But I invite you to-day to studies of a still wider scope. I propose to you to extend the range of your interest beyond what we are wont to call the Holy Land. Let us examine the history of religion not only along one consecrated line of its development through a particular nationality, language, book, or teacher—let us approach it as a general, if not a practically universal fact. What gain may we expect from this enlargement of our view; what new avenues of knowledge may it open to us; and under what conditions may such an adventure hope for some measure of success? I was once present at a conference to consider the advantage of the study of Comparative Religion to Christian missionaries. Much was said, and wisely, on the necessity that the modern heralds of the Gospel should put themselves in sympathy with the people whom they desire to convert, and, before attempting to change their ways of thought and worship, should first learn to understand them. To you this plea would be addressed with-

out avail, for the spirit of missionary enterprise in distant lands—I will not now ask from what causes, and whether well or ill—has never flourished among us. But behind the question which was then discussed really lay one of deeper import. May not the inquirer find that the investigation of the faiths of other races gives him a clearer insight not only into their religions, but also into his own? Is it not possible that he may thereby learn to distinguish between its permanent truths and its perishable illusions, and disengage the essence from the form? Will it not save him from clinging to beliefs or institutions that have lost their meaning, and confirm his ideas and quicken his emotions by connecting them with the larger thoughts and feelings of mankind?

I.

The conception that there are common elements in different religions is the natural result of human intercourse, which discovers that the terms of religious thought can often be traced from language to language, and the objects of religious worship can be identified with more or less completeness from land to land, just as men walk the same earth, gaze at the same sun, and repose under the same sky. When the conquests of Alexander carried the science of Europe to the unknown East, the enthusiasm of the Greek humanists was roused by the vast possibilities of enquiry flung open to them, and Alexandria became the centre of a passion for research such as the world had never seen. Explorers were despatched to distant countries, and scholars and philosophers were engaged at home in collecting, classifying, and summarising the facts which they accumulated. India was not forgotten, and a succession of treatises, of which only the titles now remain, testified to the diligence of ambassadors and to travellers' zeal. The great patron of literature in the third century, B.C., had the

good fortune to be served by a librarian of bold conceptions, for he aimed, says Josephus, at nothing less than a collection of all the books to be found in the world.[1] The well-known story that he suggested to the king that he should procure a copy of the Jewish Law, did not satisfy the beliefs of a later time, saturated with the peculiar syncretism which marked the first ages of our era. The Christian fathers Eusebius and Epiphanius report that he comprised within his regards the sacred books of the Ethiopians, Indians, Persians, Elamites, Babylonians Assyrians, Chaldeans, Romans, Phœnicians, Syrians, and Greeks.[2] This is obviously a rhetorical enumeration, not a statement of fact;[3] but it is sufficient to note the idea that it represents, viz., that it was possible to embrace in one view the religions of the known world, to set them side by side, to compare their resemblances, and discern the elements of a common truth. For the attitude of early Christianity to other religions was by no means one of exclusiveness and hostility. Its noblest teachers were too conscious of the debts which they owed to their Greek culture to turn their backs upon it altogether. They were sensible enough of the similarities, not to say the identities, of many of the truths of morals and religion held in the schools, as well as in the church; with an eye as yet undimmed by dogmatic prepossessions, they found no difficulty in admitting that the Divine Spirit was in no man's keeping, and moved without as well as within the limits of the chosen people; and they recognised with Clement of Alexandria, that 'Philosophy had been a tutor 'to bring the Greeks to Christ.' The doctrine of the λόγος σπερμάτικος enabled them to explain how it was that Sophocles or Cleanthes could teach the unity of God beside prophet and psalmist, and Plato could legislate like a second Moses. Or,

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[1] *Antt.* xii. 2, 1.

[2] Eus. *Chron.*, ed. Scal., p. 66, 2; Epiphan. *De Pond. et Mensura*, 9.

[3] Cp. Matter, *Hist. de l'École d'Alexandrie*, i., p. 139 sqq.

if the 'seminal word' was not at hand, it was not hard to prove that the sacred books of the Jews were produced long before the rise of Greek thought, and, what was clearer than that poet and sage had caught up the accents of the Hebrew seer?[1] 'Whatever things have been rightly said among all men,' affirmed Justin Martyr, 'are the property of us Christians.'[2] In the great work of Eusebius on the 'Preparation for the Gospel,' with its wide survey of ancient faiths, the fatal doctrine, *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, has not yet extinguished all interest in the past, and in his pages philosophers debate concerning creation and providence, and poets sing of the Divine wisdom, and the insight of antiquity is vital still. It has been reserved for this University in our own day, under the guidance of the great scholar who has laboured for well nigh half-a-century on behalf of the study of Comparative Religion, to realise the project attributed to Demetrius more than two thousand years ago. But three generations since it was possible for Dr. Johnson to say, 'There are two objects of curiosity, the 'Christian world and the Mahommedan world—all the rest may 'be considered as barbarous.'[3] How great is now the change! The immense development of intelligent interest in our fellow-men through conquest and travel, through trade and religious enterprise, the discovery of sacred literatures ancient as that on which the Christian Church is founded, and even older yet, and the application of philosophical ideas to the study of beliefs and

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[1] In *De Civ. Dei*, viii. 11, Augustine withdraws an opinion which he had formerly expressed (*De Doctr. Christ.*, ii. 43), that Plato might have been a hearer of Jeremiah, or had studied his writings. A careful calculation of dates has convinced him that Plato lived too late for the Prophet, and too early for the Seventy Translators. But he still thinks that Plato may have gained some knowledge of the Scriptures through an interpreter, for there are echoes of *Genesis* in the *Timæus*.

[2] 2 *Apol.* 13.

[3] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Dr. Birkbeck Hill, iv. p. 199.

institutions of every rank and kind—have knocked away the barriers which were once so complacently established. The obsolete word, the village usage which has lost its pristine meaning and become only the children's sport, may start into life, and find their kinship with obscure customs from remotest lands, while these, in their turn, may stand related to ideas still intertwined with the language of our highest endeavour, our loftiest aspiration. And thus, by common links of thought, a mighty chain of sympathy is spread round the globe. In a new sense we are realising the unity of the race. A fresh light is thrown on its long history: we understand the significance of its struggles the meaning of the thoughts which it has striven dimly to articulate through symbol and rite, when words proved all too weak to give them form; the whole scope of our conceptions is widened, the sense of human brotherhood made strong and deep, and the student learns the first article of a world-wide faith—

'Homo sum et humani a me nil alienum puto.'

II.

But the culture of sympathy is more a condition than an end of our investigation. It is the indispensable prerequisite with which we must start, rather than the moral result which we are to attain. All sincere study is a search after truth, and the branch of truth with which our study is concerned is the nature and operation of religious belief. We seek to understand its origin, to find its sources, and account for the intellectual forms which it has assumed: we endeavour to trace its influence on thought and life, and gauge its value as a factor in the progress of mankind. What are the methods and conditions of such a study, and how does it stand related to other branches of your training in this place?

It is obvious at once that it is, in a certain sense, the complement, as it is also the handmaid, of all philosophical enquiry; and

it is indeed from the philosophical movement of the last hundred years that it has derived its greatest stimulus. When Hume published his dissertation on the Natural History of Religion, in 1757, he pointed the way to a new and fruitful field. The disputants in the Deistical controversy had already helped to vindicate for religion a basis in reason apart from the necessity of a written revelation; and Hume, appealing to such scanty facts as were accessible to him, endeavoured to work out, in a rough and ready way, the problem of its origin and growth. He traced it back to the intellectual impulse which sought for the causes of the phenomena by which man is encompassed and affected, and the emotions of hope and fear arising out of his dependence on them. From these beginnings a series of easy stages led to the deification of the powers of nature, and finally to their generalisation by reason into one supreme Mind, so that the loftiest and simplest conceptions were thus reached upon intellectual principles which were shared in common by the whole human race. The method indicated by Hume was not pursued by his successors; but, while James Mill was analysing the idea of God into a mere group of associations destitute of intrinsic reality, the philosophy of Germany had penetrated to the character and contents of mind itself, to the facts of its constitution and the validity of its processes, and found there the actual roots of faith. I need not recite now the series of definitions in which successive teachers have answered the question, 'What is religion?' It is sufficient to point out that they all treat it as a universal fact, a common element in human experience, whose sources lie in the soul of man, and his relations to the world around. They may vary in the emphasis which they lay on the intellectual apprehension of Deity, on the sense of moral obligation to him, on the emotions of awe or joy with which the soul enters his presence and lies beneath his gaze. They may differ in the hypotheses or the arguments by which

they justify the ontological conceptions with which religion cannot, in the long run, dispense. But they have all contributed to one common end, viz., the release of religion from the limits of any particular system, and its establishment on the broadest basis of thought, feeling, and action; and they have thus gathered into one brotherhood the most diverse forms of idea and expression, calling upon the historian to trace the mutual relations of their actual development, and the philosopher to determine their underlying truth.

As the student addresses himself to this task, he carries with him at least two assumptions. If religion be recognised as an inalienable possession of the human heart, it is not necessary to seek for its explanation in a complicated theory of primæval revelation. This has often been the resort of generous minds impressed with the similarity of religious beliefs through many ages and in separate lands. Two centuries ago, the English Platonists explained the resemblances of classical and Hebrew thought by the theory of an ancient monotheism divinely taught, and supported it by the impossible derivations of a pre-scientific philology.[1] In our own day the most eminent scholar-statesman of this University has argued that the mythologies—for so we may not unfairly generalise his treatment of the Olympian system—are the corruptions of truths supernaturally imparted to our first ancestors, in which the doctrines of the Trinity, of Creation and Redemption, 'formed a part of the patrimony of 'the human race.'[2] The study of the ancient Hebrew records in

[1] Thus Cudworth argues for a *θεοπαράδοτος θεολογία*, 'a theology of 'divine tradition or revelation, or a divine cabala, viz., amongst the Hebrews 'first, and afterwards communicated to the Egyptians and other nations,' *Intellectual System*, chap. iv. § 36. Saturnus is accordingly derived through Etrurian from the Hebrew *sathar*, 'to hide,' as the 'hidden' principle of the universe, *ibid.*, § 32.

[2] Gladstone, *Homer and the Homeric Age*, ii. pp. 3, 42; cp. *Juventus Mundi*, p. 207, and p. 361, where the wide extension of the practice of animal sacrifices is explained by the hypothesis of a Divine command given before the races recorded in Scripture were multiplied and dispersed.

the light of literary criticism, of the early history of mankind, and of comparative religion, has made this position no longer tenable, though echoes of it may yet be heard in current literature.[1] It is a hypothesis which has been tried and found wanting; and the philosophical student replaces it with the assumption that, under similar conditions, the operations of the human mind will resemble each other, for the courses of thought —though small causes may soon lead them far apart—tend to run in parallel channels when they issue from the same springs in mind and heart, and flow through corresponding scenery of life. Such an assumption is the necessary antecedent of all branches of the study of man. The science of anthropology reposes on the belief in the unity of the race; and, as it anticipates that the persons of any new tribe which the explorer may discover will contain the same members, and require the same sustenance as other men, so it anticipates that their social organisation will approximate to certain known types of human relations. The philologist basis his methods on the assumption of a unity of thought which must express itself in modes of utterance harmonious with it. Present him with a new language, and he may be unable to discover its key, but he knows that, when he opens the casket, he will find ideas that match his own. The interpretation of the Hittite inscriptions may still be matter of dispute, but no one doubts that the secret of the unknown characters, and of the words for which they stand, is a secret of form, and not of essence: behind the rock-cut surface three thousand years old, and the printed page of to-day's newspaper, lie minds of the same order and intellectual processes of the same kind. In the same way, the student of religions will,

[1] Thus Canon F. C. Cook, in his learned *Origins of Religion and Literature*, 1884, pleads, p. 80, that the religious forms of the Rig Veda 'bear witness at 'once to the original acceptance of one primeval truth, and to the tendencies by 'which that truth was first obscured, then corrupted, and finally superseded.'

for the purposes of history, investigate them all from the human side. He will explore their several phases, trace their modifications, watch the growth or decline of their vital forces as objective facts. He will not draw at the outset any distinction between natural and revealed, for he will soon be confronted with the fact that the same claims to revelation are raised in diverse places: they may be heard in India as well as Palestine; they are uttered on behalf of the Veda or the Koran, as well as of the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the New. I do not say that this is an exhaustive or an adequate view of any of them, but it is the only view which history can take. It points at once to the limits of the study, which does not aim at determining the truth of fact which lies behind the world's religions, but only seeks to ascertain the laws of their relation and development. It regards them as the great record of man's ascent to God. It leaves it to the philosophy of religion to vindicate an inverse relation, to treat them as the manifestation of the descent of God to man, to adjust their claims to a participation in the guidance of the Divine Spirit, and frame a theory of revelation which shall be based upon the total experience of the race.

And secondly, as our study, under the sanction of philosophy, assumes the unity of the origin and growth of religious thought in the human mind,[1] so does it also assume what may, perhaps, be called the unity of religious consciousness. Like all products of our inward activity, religion, even in its rudest state, is an exceedingly complex phenomenon. It involves notions about objective reality; it involves acts of ancient traditional usage; and it involves the feelings which are associated with them, and express themselves through them. The belief and

[1] The meaning of this phrase will be gathered from the preceding paragraph. I do not intend to imply that the first manifestations of religious belief must necessarily always have had the same form: manes-worship, nature-worship, &c.

the rite are, in fact, but the vehicle of the emotion, and it is often in the emotion where terror, aspiration, reverence, dread, gladness, hope, mingle confusedly together, that the most potent elements of religion lie. Some beliefs are naturally better calculated to excite higher emotions than others; some rites are better adapted for purifying and supporting such emotions. But it is essential to observe that, while on one side religion speaks to the intellect, and frames for itself schemes of doctrine, on another it addresses itself to the conscience, and utters a programme of law, and again it appeals to the feelings, and calls forth institutions of worship. Now the schemes of doctrine may vary, the objects around which they are centred may be differently conceived, yet the will may own the same obligation, and the soul aspire after the same beauty or right. Shall we say that we have here to deal with different religions, or, shall we not rather admit that, while theologies may be many, religion is but one? It was after this truth that the Vedic seers were groping when they cried, 'They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, 'Agni; sages name variously him who is but one;' or, again, 'the sages in their hymns give many forms to him who is but 'one.'[1] The identity of religious consciousness as it reached out to separate deities, revealed the secret of their unity, and demanded an identification of the theologies of rival bards and different sacred families. The same lesson was taught in the temples during the first ages of Christianity, and in the mysteries so popular throughout the empire. The titles and attributes of the deities in the East were blended in strange fashion with the patrons of Rome. When Jupiter stood surrounded by a vast crowd of all the gods, the reflective mind perceived, as Maximus of Madaura wrote to Augustine,[2] that

[1] Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. v., p. 353; Max Müller, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 311-313.

[2] August. *Epp.* xvi. 48.

'There is one Supreme God, without beginning, without natural 'offspring, who is, as it were, the God and Mighty Father of all. 'The powers of this Deity diffused through the universe which 'he has made, we worship under many names, as we are all 'ignorant of his true name. Thus it happens that, while in 'diverse supplications we approach separately, as it were, certain 'parts of the Divine Being, we are seen, in reality, to be the 'worshippers of him in whom all these parts are one.'[1] If this be so, it will be seen that the historical student cannot classify religions as true and false, any more than as revealed and not revealed. Only on one side can religion express itself in propositions, and fall under categories of judgment. The elements of belief may be formulated; they may be tested by wider knowledge; they may be decomposed and recombined under the light of ever-widening truth. But the spirit of religion lives on undisturbed—nay, it is quickened with higher thought, and cleared by the insight of a more penetrating vision and a purer heart. When this is recognised, the history of religion ceases to present the dreary spectacle of corruption and decay. It is no tale of degeneration, in which the divine accents have almost lost all trace of their heavenly origin. It gives back to philosophy much more than the assumptions which it borrowed from her at the outset. It provides her with a mighty confirmation of the truths which she reaches by such different paths. When the moralist declares that the law of right is written upon the tablets of the heart, the philologist meets him with the phenomena of language, enshrining the idea of obligation in many

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[1] Cp. Apuleius, *Metam.* xi. 5, 'En adsum tuis commota precibus, rerum naturæ parens, elementorum omnium domina, saeculorum progenies initialis, summa numinum, regina Manium, prima caelitum, deorum dearumque facies uniformis . . . cujus nomen unicum multiformi specie ritu vario nomine multijugo totus veneratur orbis. Inde primigenii Phryges Pessinuntiam [nominant] deûm matrem, hinc autochthones Attici Cecropeiam Minervam,' &c.

forms, and the jurist with unwritten customs and principles of law. When the thinker declares that the being of God is involved in the very tissue of our reason, the student of comparative religion points to the universal endeavour to give explicit utterance to the same truth from the rudest recognition of power beyond ourselves to the largest generalisations of a scientific insight: for the belief and worship of mankind are the great records in which our race has displayed the structure of its mind, and uttered the very beatings of its heart. Nay, the witness of experience may be even more cogent than the demonstrations of the class-room, for it is finely said that, while 'to 'the philosopher the existence of God may seem to rest on a 'syllogism, in the eyes of the historian it rests on the whole 'evolution of human thought.'[1]

III.

But a subject so vast must be modestly approached, and study can only be truly fruitful when it is carefully planned and wisely limited. The origins of religion have of late years been eagerly debated. A prodigious literature has gathered around them, and within this University you may learn from the most eminent representatives of different schools. So far as the birth-hour of faith comes in the view of the anthropologist, or of the student of language, the best of guidance is opened to you in the lectures of Dr. Tylor and the writings of Prof. Max Müller. But whatever interest, historical and philosophical, hangs round the problems of the sources and first forms of our religion, they are probably of less import to the inquirer who proposes to devote himself to the service of his fellow-man through the Christian ministry. The questions which beset him are of a different kind. He is concerned with the story at its upper rather than its lower end, and seeks to know what light is thrown

[1] Max Müller, *Natural Religion*, p. 98.

on the real meaning of Christianity, on the connexion between theology and morals, and on the value of religion as a great social and historic force. I propose, therefore, to approach our subject along two different lines. In the first place, let us take some specific conception and track it through from form to form. Let us examine its rise, and note the early modifications which it undergoes in races exposed to different influences and marked by different mental characters; let us trace the manner in which it attracts to itself moral distinctions, and becomes a nucleus round which the culture of the conscience grows; and finally, as it lives on into higher faiths, let us observe how religious ideas and forms once ethnically distinct have influenced each other, so that the pedigree of our belief contains elements from various sources, and the genealogy of our thought reaches out over an ever-widening area of ancestry. For this end, partly because of its intrinsic significance, and partly to carry on the studies which some of you have already begun, I will select for our examination during this academic year the doctrine of a future life, the immense importance of which in connexion with the roots of law, society, and religion, will emerge more clearly as we proceed. And, secondly, I invite you to the study of some specific religion, large enough in its moral purport, or its actual career, to be reckoned like Christianity among the spiritual forces of the world. These are, indeed, but few. Apart from the philosophical schools of Greece, they gather, for the most part, around great names, or they are enshrined in mighty literatures. One continent has been pre-eminently their home: China, India, Persia, Palestine, Arabia,—from the Pacific to the Mediterranean or the Red Sea, Asia has been the mother of them all. Among these it is not difficult for me to make a choice. I have already indicated that behind Christianity lies the religion of Israel, which claims our special attention, not only because it holds for us the key to the interpretation of the thought of Jesus, but also for its continuous

history as a great national faith, still living and potent at this hour. But our inquiry is to extend beyond the special lines of our own descent, and we turn most naturally to India, where speculative thought has enjoyed a freedom and displayed a variety hardly surpassed by Western culture, and where the ancient ties of kinship of race are knit with the modern obligations of government. In the long procession of its religions, one figure takes the eye at once. The origin of Buddhism, unlike that of the Vedic faiths, or the Brahmanism which followed them, lies like that of Christianity within historic view. It can be fixed, with less precision, it is true, to a given time; it can be located in a definite area, it can be attached to a particular person. Its antecedents are, in part at least, well known; its Scriptures are being published, translations of some of them lie upon your shelves; and its main ideas are within the reach of all. And through what wondrous phases does it not pass? In the story of its first preaching and of its missionary enterprise, in the evolution of its beliefs, in the development of its rites and organisation, the wondering student sees, over and over again, the parallel to the ecclesiastical incidents of his own religion; and, above all, he beholds how a carefully-framed ethical culture and discipline of the conscience, reposing on the unchallenged assumption of the self-acting moral order of the universe, and independent of the gods who live beneath the inevitable law of dissolution, ends by elaborating the conception of a Teacher who devotes himself to the practice of righteousness, through countless lives, for the attainment of the insight which will enable him to deliver men from suffering and sin, and finally erects the Spirit of all the Buddhas into God.

How these studies may touch the history of Christian belief, and even illustrate the Evangelical representations of Jesus himself, may best be shown by one or two brief instances.

IV.

On the western wall of the church at Chaldon, in Surrey, a painting was discovered twenty years ago which carries us into the heart of the mediæval conceptions of heaven, of judgment, and of hell. The picture is divided into two parts by a belt of clouds, through which there runs a mighty ladder. At the bottom are the torments of the condemned—a bridge of spikes, along which they are driven by hideous demons standing at either end; flaming cauldrons, where hapless souls are prodded with pitch-forks; devouring monsters, and all forms of ugliness and sin. At the top is the Redeemer, between sun and moon, in the act of blessing. In the intervening tier are two subjects on either side of the ladder. To the right, the Messiah overthrows Satan, and liberates the souls who waited in Hades for his advent. At the left stands the archangel Michael, with a pair of scales in his hand, in the act of weighing souls. Here is the real test of the judgment. By one scale stands a demon, putting his hoofed paw in the pan to drag it down; by the other, the soul, in an agony of supplication, entreats the archangel to incline it on his side. The spirits for whom the award is favourable ascend the ladder to heaven: the doomed are hurled into the pit below, and vainly cling to the lower rungs ere they are wrenched away for punishment.

Enter now one of the Egyptian tombs of the Theban period in the solemn Valley of the Dead; or open a scroll laid in a coffin of the time of the Exodus. What will you see? There, too, are the tortures of the wicked in the world below; there, too, are flames and serpents; there are figures up to their chins in water, holding out bound hands; there are the demon-headsmen and the awful block for decapitation at the second death. There, too, are the scenes of happiness for the justified, amid verdant meadows beside the heavenly Nile, or in closer fellowship with the Sun-god as he glides along in his bark. There,

too, is the ladder by which the departed soul might climb back to the earth to revisit the body in the tomb, or ascend to the paradise sometimes located in the north-eastern sky.[1] And there, once more, is the judgment. Within the hall of the Twofold Law sits Osiris, 'lord of life and king of eternity.'[2] Hither the soul is led for judgment. Egyptian eschatology did not postpone this till a general resurrection;[3] it awaited each soul in due course after death. The departed is brought before forty-two assessors, in solemn array, before whom he makes his claim to have fulfilled the commandment, in such words as these:—

'I am not a doer of what is wrong; I am not a plunderer; I am not a robber; I am not a slayer of men; I am not a niggard; I do not seize the property of the gods; I am not a teller of lies; I am not a monopoliser of food; I am no extortioner; I am not unchaste; I am not the causer of others' tears.' . . .

Then he is introduced, sometimes by the two goddesses of the Double Law, to the actual trial. Under the presidency of Thoth stands a balance. In one scale is the heart of the deceased, the organ of conscience; it is weighed against the plume, which typifies the Law. Anūbis, the conductor of souls, examines the indicator of the balance. The Goddess of Destiny is by his side, and the impersonations of Fortune and Birth are close at hand. Beyond stands Thoth, recording the result, with the terrible form of Amemit, the devourer, behind him:—

'Here is Thoth, the judge of the cycle of the great gods, in the presence of Osiris. Listen to this judgment in due form. The heart of the Osiris is weighed, and his soul standeth in evidence for it; his case is straight upon the balance;

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[1] The ladder is figured even in early Pyramid texts, and mimic ladders were sometimes deposited in coffins.

[2] Sometimes enthroned, as in the sarcophagus of Seti I., or in the tomb of Rameses V., at the top of a long flight of steps, up which the souls must climb.

[3] On the great western portal of Notre Dame, in Paris (1215 A.D.), the soul-weighing is an incident in the last judgment. It occurs in the middle tier; beneath, the earth and sea give up their dead at the sound of the archangel's trump.

there is found no iniquity in him; he is not one who cut down the bread of temples; he was not sordid in his actions; he is not one who set his speech in motion against others as long as he was upon the earth.'[1]

How many elements, in spite of all their diversity, have these scenes in common! The conception of future judgment is one of the earliest forms assumed by the belief that this life does not wholly satisfy the demands of a moral order, and calls for some doom upon the wicked, some recompense for the just. But it was nowhere worked out with such precision as in ancient Egypt; and nowhere received such splendid literary and monumental expression as is provided in those chapters added to the Book of the Dead which first appear about the fourteenth century B.C., and are inscribed with such copious illustration in the wonderful sculpture-paintings of sarcophagus and tomb. It is especially observable in the two representations which I have described to you, that the soul is being *weighed*. Is this an accidental coincidence? Is it simply due to a common metaphor, as when the Psalmist declares—[2]

'Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie:
In the balances they will go up;
They are altogether lighter than vanity;'

or when the hand-writing on the wall yields the terrible meaning—'*Tekel*, thou art weighed in the balances, and art 'found wanting?'[3] I cannot think so, but the links of connexion are not easy to find. The incident of the soul-weighing does not make its appearance in Christian art till the eleventh century, when it immediately becomes highly popular. It occurs on the portal of a church at St. Trophine, in the South of

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[1] See the *Papyrus of Ani*, written at the end of the fourteenth century B.C., recently published by the Trustees of the British Museum, with an introduction by Mr. Le Page Renouf.

[2] *Ps.* lxii. 9 (R. V.).

[3] *Dan.* v. 27; cp. *Job* xxxi. 6, and 4 *Esdr.* iii. 34.

France, assigned to this date.[1] It is wrought in mosaic in the twelfth century in the cathedral of the Island of Torcello, near Venice; it is figured in a copy of the Gospels, at Wölfenbüttel, dated 1194; the Chaldon fresco seems to belong to the last decades of the same hundred years;[2] and it is described in the vision of the Irish Tundale, attributed to the year 1149. It then takes its place in the representation of the Last Day, which seized hold of the imagination of this age with such extraordinary power. This was a new subject for Western art. The first believers threw all the passion of their hope into the resurrection-joy, and the life of blessed fellowship with their Lord. For centuries the sculptures of their sarcophagi, and the pictures of their tombs, are filled with the emblems of the risen glory, and the sojourn in the heavenly fields. In these there are no terrors in the infernal world, no terrible test through Michael and his scales. But the Jewish and the Christian fathers both looked for the weighing of men's actions after death,[3] and it is by no violent transition that the soul itself, or a figure representing the moral sum of its deeds for good or ill, should take its place in the

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[1] Heider, *Die Romanische Kirche zu Schöngrabern*, p. 237.

[2] See Mr. J. G. Waller's pamphlet, *on a Painting discovered in Chaldon Church, Surrey*, London, 1885. Mr. Waller mentions some other English instances.

[3] According to the theology of the Synagogue, Weber, *Alt-Synag. Theol.*, p. 271, it was solemnly performed by God. Some Rabbis thought the judgment was held on New Year's Day, and the verdict was sealed on the Day of Atonement. Others regarded it as a daily liability. See *Rosh ha-Shana*, in Wünsche, *Bab. Talm.* i., p. 327. In a passage attributed to Gregory ('dicit enim Greg. in *Dialogo*'), which I have been unable to find, in the Sermon on St. Michael, *Sermones Dormi Secure*, lvii., the good and evil angels come on the separation of the soul from the body, and weigh the merits and demerits of the deceased; cp. Waller, p. 36. The balance is occasionally figured in Christian sepulchral inscriptions, *e.g.*, Aringhi, *Roma Subterr.*, ed. 1659, Paris, vol. ii. pp. 12, 59. Prof. Cheetham, art. 'balance,' in *Dict. of Christian Antiquities*, is inclined to believe that it has there no moral significance; but the question can hardly be decided without a larger basis of comparison. Is the balance ever found on Gentile tombs of the same period with a decided trade-meaning?

scale.[1] So Rashnû, according to Persian teaching, the angel of justice, in the presence of the mediator Mithra, presided over the weighing of the spirits at the Chinvat bridge, leading from hell to Paradise.[2] And with an analogous purport Zeus weighed in his golden scales the destinies of the Greeks or Trojans, or of Hector and Achilles, ere the last mortal combat,[3] a theme which Æschylus took for his drama of the 'Psychostasia,' and of which more than one representation has come down to us.[4]

But why should the duty of superintending the scales be assigned to Michael? Ever since the Book of Daniel he had acquired a more and more prominent part in Jewish angelology in connexion with the destinies of the dead. It was he who contended with the devil for the body of Moses. It was he who guided the souls of the righteous to God. He served as the mystic high-priest of the heavenly Jerusalem, where the just were offered in solemn sacrifice to the Most High.[5] The beliefs of the Synagogue passed into the Church, and when Christian faith was confronted with Greek thought, a remarkable assimilation took place. The same function of guardian and guide of souls had been discharged since ancient days by Hermes. This can, indeed, be traced back to early mythological ideas, though Diogenes Laertius affirmed that Pythagoras had brought the myth to Greece from Egypt. To him were the souls committed for escort to the judgment-seat below, just as the Egyptian Thoth conducted them to the foot of the throne, and presided over their

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[1] The imaginative presentment of a man's moral worth in a counterpart of beauty or ugliness is of ancient date—cp. the story of Pāpman, the incarnation of Prajāpati's evil deeds, in the *Aitareya Brāhmana*, iii. 3, 33.

[2] Pahlavi Texts, *Sacred Books of the East*, xxiv. p. 18.

[3] *Iliad*, ix. 67—74, xxii. 210—214.

[4] Cp. Didron, *Christian Iconography*, London, 1886, vol. ii. p. 180.

[5] Mr. Schechter kindly refers me to the following passages in the Babylonian Talmud, *Chagigah*, 12 *b* (Wünsche, i. p. 271), *Menachoth*, 10 *a* (*ibid.*, ii. 4 p. 56), and *Sebachim*, 62 *a* (*ibid.*, ii. 4, p. 9).

trial. So in the tomb of M. Aurelius, a priest of Mithra, does Mercury stand at the opening of the descent to the under-world through which the soul of the lady Vibia is carried off to the land of the dead. There he introduces her to the tribunal of Dis and Proserpine, and after the judgment the 'bonus angelus' escorts her through a gate into flowery fields, where she is seen reclining at the banquet of the righteous in the realm of the blest.[1] Thus the part of Thoth-Hermes-Mercury was passed on to Michael. He is figured on a gem seated on a rock, wearing the winged petasus—emblem of the god—and holding his caduceus; and underneath is inscribed the name of the archangel.[2] Churches dedicated to St. Michael arose on the site of ancient temples of Mercury; and when the theme of judgment became once more prominent in Christian expectation, and acquired pictorial form, Michael took his place in it with the functions which he had inherited from his predecessors in Greece and Egypt, and thus on the walls of sanctuaries in our own land the thoughts of ancient hearts are still revealed.[3]

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[1] See Garucci, *Storia della Arte Christiana*, vi. 493—494.

[2] Didron, *Christ. Icon.*, ii. p. 181.

[3] See Maury's essays on Psychostasis and Psychopompic deities in the *Revue Archéologique*, i. 1844. Subsequent writers have not, I think, added anything material to his investigations. Springer, in the *Repertorium für Kunst-wissenschaft*, vii., 1884, p. 396, denies the filiation which Maury seeks to establish, on the ground that it cannot be shown in any older representation than the twelfth century, or traced back to early Christian art traditions: he believes it is sufficiently accounted for by the Biblical texts. But in view of the fact that the judgment itself is not depicted earlier (save as it is implied in one or two representations of the sheep and the goats), it is not surprising that Michael does not appear with his scales. Is it not, however, possible that fresh stimulus may have been given to Western imagination about this time by the new contact with the East, which made the eleventh and twelfth centuries so fruitful for the subsequent development of European thought?

V.

If from an incident in the Last Judgment you pass to the Judgment itself, the central conception of Christ as Judge, which plays so large a part in mediæval thought, carries us back at once into the New Testament, and plants us in the very heart of the great cycle of Messianic ideas. And one of the first questions which the student of primitive Christianity is called upon to answer, relates to the permanent worth of these ideas. Are they essential and enduring elements of Christianity, or do they simply constitute the outward form through which the religion of Jesus was launched upon the world—the husk or shell which its vital power burst asunder and outgrew? The problem is not an easy one. It demands a patient examination of the conditions under which the Gospel records were compiled, of the words ascribed to Jesus, and the elements of belief from which they sprang. And when all these considerations have been weighed, and the long history of the Messianic hope has been traced to its furthest roots, it will still remain to many minds a mystery how, in the providence of God, a particular and national expectation should have become the vehicle of universal truth, and what seems an illusion should have proved the most potent factor in winning the victory for reality.

Here lies a difficulty to which the philosophical historian will offer no hasty answer, though he will see at once that even within the records of Christianity it is by no means unique. But the consideration of an analogous case beyond its range may not be without significance. If the inquirer into the origin of the Gospel-story is confronted with the widespread outlook for the coming Messiah, a similar anticipation gathers round the origins of Buddhism. The ministry of Jesus is related by the Evangelists under the conviction that he is the predicted Christ, the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, whom seers had beheld afar off, and for whom the nation yearned. In the same way the career

of Gotama is described in the Buddhist sacred books, under the conviction that he is the 'Great Man,' to whom Scripture pointed, and for whose advent of deliverance mankind was waiting. Thus, in the introduction to the Ambaṭṭha Sutta, the Brahman Pokkharasādi, having heard the report that a Buddha has arisen in the person of Gotama of the Sakya clan, sends his disciple Ambaṭṭha to inquire whether Gotama actually satisfies the conditions of this mighty claim.[1]

Now at that time the Brahman Pokkharasādi had a disciple named Ambaṭṭha, a student versed in the ancient scriptures. He was acquainted with the three Vedas, with vocabularies and etymology, and the traditions of old. He had studied metre, he knew the art of exposition, he was proficient in casuistry and the marks of the 'Great Man,' and was duly sanctioned and recognised in respect of his own master's teaching of the Three-fold Knowledge, according to the saying 'Whatsoever I know, that thou knowest also; whatsoever thou knowest, that know I likewise.'

Then the Brahman Pokkharasādi said to the young Ambaṭṭha, 'The Samaṇa Gotama, dear Ambaṭṭha, sprung from the Sakya line, who left the Sakya family for the religious life, being on his journey among the Kosalas with five hundred mendicant followers, has arrived at Icchānaṅkala, and is staying there in the forest-grove. Now, concerning the venerable Gotama the report has gone forth that this is a Blessed One, holy and fully enlightened, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, possessing knowledge of the world, without an equal, a guide to erring mortals, teacher of gods and men, a blessed Buddha. He by himself understands and sees as it were face to face this universe, the world of devas, the worlds of Māra and of Brahma, and all creatures Samaṇas and Brahmans, gods and men, and he makes this knowledge known to others. The truth doth he proclaim both in its letter and in its spirit, lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, lovely in its consummation; the higher life doth he make known in all its purity and perfectness.[2] Good is it to go and see such holy men. Go now, dear Ambaṭṭha, and approach the Samaṇa Gotama, and when thou comest to him discern whether the venerable Gotama is what the report that has gone forth concerning him affirms, or not; whether the venerable Gotama is such an one or not such an one. Thus shall we know the venerable Gotama.'

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[1] *Dīgha Nikāya*, vol. i., p. 88.

[2] This long formula frequently recurs in the Buddhist texts. For the translation see Prof. T. W. Rhys-Davids, 'Buddhist Suttas,' *S. B. E.*, xi. p. 187.

'But,' asks Ambaṭṭha, 'how shall I discern whether the venerable Gotama is what the report that has gone forth concerning him affirms, whether the venerable Gotama is such an one or not such an one?'

'There have come down to us in the Scriptures,' answers the Brahman, thirty-two marks of the Great Man; and for the Great Man endowed with these there are two courses open, and no more. If he lives a householder's life, he becomes a king, a universal monarch righteous and reigning in righteousness, lord of the four quarters of the earth, conqueror, protector of his people. . . . After conquering the ocean-girt earth without a rod and without a sword, he sits enthroned. But if he quits his home, and leads a religious life without a home, he becomes a holy Buddha, who removes from the world the veil of ignorance and sin. Now I, dear Ambaṭṭha, have taught thee the Scriptures, and thou hast received them.'[1]

It is not necessary to recite now the sequel of the story, in the course of which first Ambaṭṭha and then Pokkharasādi is satisfied that Gotama possesses the marks of the Great Man, and is in fact a blessed Buddha. The chief point now deserving of notice is the representation, that the expectation of the Great Man was founded on the ancient *mantras* or sacred hymns, as the hope of the Messiah rested on Hebrew prophecy, and formed part of the current teaching of the Brahmans just as the Rabbis discussed the conditions of the manifestation of the Christ. The enumeration of the marks is part of the regular sacred lore transmitted by the preceptor to the pupil, and handed on from one generation to another. Even the double function of the Great Man is apparently anticipated; he is either to be a Universal Monarch ruling without recourse to arms in righteousness, or he is to be a Teacher who will lift from the world the veil of ignorance and sin. The influence of this conception upon the legend of Gotama's incarnation, his wondrous birth, his infancy, his departure from home, his attainment of Buddahood, his temptation and his ministry, we may trace in more detail hereafter: it must suffice to point out now that in the earliest story of the infancy so far accessible[2] within the Piṭakas them-

[1] Comp. Sela Sutta, in Sutta Nipāta, iii. 7, *S. B. E.* x., pp. 99—102.

[2] In the Nālaka Sutta of the Sutta Nipāta, *S. B. E.* x., p. 125.

selves, the sage Asita to whom the babe is presented is described as 'knowing the marks and the *mantras*,' and on their basis predicting his future Buddahood. When the Teacher actually starts on his career, wherever the report is circulated that the Buddha has appeared in Gotama, there is no doubt or enquiry in Brahmanical circles as to what it means, any more than the Sanhedrîn was at a loss to interpret the claim raised by the Apostles on behalf of their Master. The sole question is 'Can 'the Samaṇa Gotama justify his pretensions?' 'Art thou he 'that should come, or do we look for another?'

It is much to be regretted that, though the marks are twice enumerated, the texts do not think it necessary to specify the passages on which they are founded. It is quite possible that the conception of their roots in the ancient hymns may be really of later origin, or may be due to schools of thought or forms of popular expectation unrepresented in the Brahmanical books which have come down to us. Subsequent ages certainly dropped them altogether out of sight, for the statement of the commentator that the science of explaining the marks of the Great Man extended to twelve thousand treatises, wherein the Buddha-*mantras* were comprised in sixteen thousand verses,[1] is tantamount to an admission that this part of the Buddhist dogma had been forgotten, and in later days existed only in imagination. There is, therefore, no clue from the Buddhist side to the hymns which were regarded by the Order as prophetic of the Teacher. Under diverse political conditions the hope had never assumed the apocalyptic form which clothed so many passionate utterances from Daniel to Revelation, and no work survives (if such ever existed) in which a believer vindicated his Master's Buddhahood against the Brahmans, as Justin the Martyr sought to prove to the Jew Trypho the Messiahship of

[1] *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*, i., p. 248.

Jesus. In the absence of such aid, we are driven back upon the literature of the great caste in whose keeping were the sacred hymns. The search is not wholly fruitless, though the results which it yields cannot be called precise.[1] It leads back to two great conceptions which make their appearance within the limits of the Rig Veda. One is that of Vishnu, who was lord of the world, which he folded in his beneficence, descending to the earth to allot the inheritances of men, and traversing the mundane regions for Manu when he was oppressed.[2] The second is that of Mahā-purusha (literally, the 'Great Man'), a mysterious cosmic form, the pervading spirit of creation, source of the sacred knowledge, so that he was the origin of all wisdom and truth. How these were fused together into the shapes in which we find them in the Buddhist texts we can only dimly guess. But the issue of the process is not equally obscure. If we should be justified in inferring from the Gospels alone, without other evidence, the existence of a belief among the countrymen of Jesus in one 'who should come,' we are in the same way warranted in affirming the prevalence in the Ganges valley around Benares, in Behar and Oude, of a hope that a mighty Sovereign or an enlightened Teacher would arise, when the Sakya-Son went forth to found his kingdom of righteousness. Taking up a current theory derived, as was supposed, from the religious tradition which the Brahmans regarded as revealed, the disciples of Gotama applied it to their master. How much of it he himself appropriated, it will never be possible to decide with certainty; but it is clear that it has profoundly influenced the picture of his career. Suffused with the vivid moral enthusiasm which it was the special effect of Gotama's teaching to evoke, every part of it immediately acquires an ethical colouring.

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[1] It must be enough to refer here to the brilliant analysis in Sénart's *Légende du Buddha*.

[2] Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, iv., pp. 87, 82.

In the discourse on the Marks,[1] each of the thirty-two signs is traced back to some antecedent excellence. The wheels with their wondrous rays appear on his feet, because in a former birth he had become man for the welfare of the many, dispelling anxiety, terror, and fear. He is taper-fingered, long-heeled, and of noble stature, because he had abstained from taking the life of any creature. His golden hue arose from the days when he had been gentle, abounding in hope, free from anger, wrath, and ill-will; while the protuberance, corresponding to a glory on his head, sprang out of his past career as a leader of the multitude through virtuous paths, his eminence in right conduct in word and deed and thought, through distribution of gifts, through the practice of virtue, through Sabbath-observance, through cherishing of father and mother, through reverence for teachers, and such other excellent ways. It is in accordance with these conceptions of character and blameless conversation that the picture of Gotama is drawn in the Jātakas as a pious king, who will not suffer his thousand warriors to resist an invading army, but allows himself and them to be taken prisoners and led away to execution, exhorting them to cherish good-will even to their enemies;[2] or that other picture of him as the universal monarch of boundless beneficence, who constructs lotus ponds for the use of all the people, and plants them with flowers of every season, and stations bathing-men on the banks, and finally establishes 'a perpetual grant—to wit, food for the hungry, drink for the 'thirsty, clothing for the naked, means of conveyance for the 'infirm, couches for the tired, wives for those who desired wives, 'and money for those who were in want.'[3] These are, no doubt, the peculiar creations of ethical Buddhism, but they were not produced out of nothing—they were the result of the moral influences embodied in the Teaching and in the Order, working

[1] The Lakkhaṇa Suttanta, *Dīgha Nikāya*, xxx.

[2] *Jātaka*, i. p. 264. [3] *Buddhist Suttas*, p. 264.

on antecedent material. The same is the case also with the central conception of the Buddha who passes through a long series of preliminary existences, with unflagging resolve to devote himself to the welfare of the world, by attaining and revealing the truth which will deliver it from ignorance and sin. We may reject the view of life in which Gotama found peace; it is directly opposed to that which we have learned of Jesus, which we find confirmed by the age-long experience of faithful endeavour, which we have realised with an awful wonder and a trembling joy in moments of vision vouchsafed to our own souls; but, none the less, the growth of Buddhism, its missionary zeal, its widespread diffusion, demand an explanation. Founded upon essential error, supported on an illusory expectation, turning for proof to prophecies which could not be verified, how should it have conquered empires and drawn hundreds of millions to the Teacher's feet? The answer is not hard to find. It is, in brief, that it presented a new moral ideal. It spoke with authority, but it was an authority that penetrated at once to the conscience, and called forth fresh aspiration. It began by offering a remedy for the miseries of existence, but it placed it in holiness for its own sake; and it portrayed this in the sublime figure of the man who gave not one life only, but an immense succession, amid labour and struggle, toil and pain, to the service of his fellows, and opened the way for others to do likewise. And if Buddhism could thus spread through India, China, and Tibet, is it surprising that Christianity should burst the swaddling bands of its infancy, subdue the Roman Empire, win Europe to its side, and in these last ages travel round the world? The secret of growth in both cases must be the same; it must lie in that which satisfies the abiding instincts of humanity. No falsehood can live save by the truth to which it is akin. It is the great end of all history of thought, in philosophy, art, poetry, religion, to reach the reality within the form

The common power of Christianity and Buddhism, so far as they run in parallel courses, and show like results, must lie in their joint appeal, though in different ways, to the same consciousness of evil, the same earnestness of endeavour, the same longing after holiness, the same implicit trust that in the constitution of things there dwells an eternal Right.[1]

VI.

But I need not tell you that Christianity does much more than this. Buddhism and Christianity are both of them religions of redemption, but Christianity is also a religion of universal progress. 'Work out your own salvation with 'diligence' were the dying words of Gotama to his disciples; but he could not add that which gives the Christian strength, 'for 'it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do.' The impulse imparted by Jesus embodied itself in the Church, which has now bound round the whole globe with the Master's prayer, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in 'heaven.' In this great thought is centred all our hope. The Christian minister knows that his highest task is to enter into its secret, and apply it to the enigmas of life. But he who would take up this service must first learn what life is. It is not a sufficient education for the physiologist simply to eat and sleep; nor is it the sole qualification for understanding the phenomena of society to earn a living, to read a newspaper, and pay your rates. He who aspires to be the interpreter of the kingdom of God, even though it be to a handful of hearers in an obscure congregation, cannot dispense with earnest study of the conditions around him. The vicissitudes of a hundred years have not

[1] The whole Buddhist scheme depends on the absolute certainty of the unerring regulation of the succession of existences under the law of moral requital summed up in the term *Karma*. By what agency this law is enforced is never explained, but its perfect faithfulness is everywhere assumed.

sufficed to crush the spirit of the Revolution; it is assuming new and vigorous forms; at every turn the foundations of ancient authority are attacked and its demands contested; nor is it possible to fling the field of religion open to all enquirers, and over the gates of human institutions to write up 'no admittance for unbelievers.' It is the object of our faith to make the Church co-extensive with the world, not merely in geographical fact, but in moral and spiritual significance, to knit the phases of human energy into one whole, to view the modes in which that energy expresses itself in their right relations to each other, and discern the common purpose that runs through them all. But if this faith cannot justify itself either by the outward facts of history, or by the inward judgments of conscience, it will be in vain for us to invoke the sanctions of a supernatural revelation. If God does work in us to will or to do, the products of human toil, the laborious achievements of the age-long efforts of our race, expressed in the ideas of the family, of property, law, government, the state, cannot be without significance: and within the philosophy of man, beside a philosophy of history and religion, you must include a philosophy of society. On such a study you will be called to enter: what, finally, is its relation to that to which I have already bidden you? Only one aspect of it can be noted now. Once more it lies in the maxim of the ancient sage: to understand the present you must investigate the past.

And what, you will ask me, will be the gain? Has it not been said by one of our modern teachers,[1] 'We survey the past, 'and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless 'blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty 'aspiration;' so that, with a corresponding bitterness, another writer has grimly described history as 'the martyrdom of man.' There is a point of view, no doubt, from which these indictments

[1] Mr. Balfour, *Address at the Church Congress*, Manchester, 1888.

are easily brought. We all know that there are pages in the record which are red with violence, and others that are dull and dark with ignorance, just as in the daily newspaper you will find the reports of the police-courts, and the Inspectors of schools sometimes make alarming discoveries about the deficiencies of our national education. Yet, who would wish to exchange the Oxford of to-day for the Britain through which the Romans drove Icneild Street, or the unnamed land in which the cave-dweller struggled with the tiger and the bear? This at any rate has not been the opinion of humanity itself; and in this respect, at least, its own pleas ought to be admitted by those who so easily dismiss the whole of its endeavours as futile, and its hopes as vain. And the answer which one generation after another will give as you interrogate its secret trust, is this: 'The purpose which inspires 'us is not our own, it is given us by heaven; the sanctions which 'guard us are divine; the rule of our life comes from on high.' All through the mighty story the roots of law and of religion are again and again intertwined, and you cannot study the simplest rite or the most elementary social usage without the imaginative reconstruction of an entire faith. And in its higher forms it is still the same. One chapter after another in the great statute book of the nations begins: 'Thus saith the Lord.' The voice may be that of a man, but it still points to an authority above itself. When Zaleucus was chosen by the people of Locri to draw up for them a code of laws, he began, says Diodorus,[1] first of all, concerning the immortal gods. 'For at the very outset 'of his legislation he declared that the dwellers in the cities 'ought to be convinced that the gods exist, and that the order 'and beauty of the heavens should teach them that these are not 'the products of human handiwork or of chance. Therefore, let 'them reverence the gods as the real causes of all things fair and

[1] Diod. Sic., xii. 20.

'good in life; and let them keep their hearts pure from all evil; 'inasmuch as the gods do not take pleasure in the sacrifices of 'the wicked, but in the righteous and fair conduct of the good.' Zaleucus, doubtless, never heard of Isaiah. But, if these thoughts were really his, they are not unworthy to stand beside the words of the contemporary Hebrew seer who took up the doctrine of his great predecessor—'Cease to do evil, learn to do 'good;' and affirmed, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is 'good, and what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, 'to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' I will not ask whether these particular sentiments come under the head of 'helpless blundering' or of 'empty aspiration.' Be it enough to notice, that wherever men have reflected on the origin of things, on the forces embodied in their great social traditions, on the real meaning of their customs, arts, institutions, laws, these have always seemed to them stamped with a significance transcending human skill; they are the revelation of a God. Nowhere is this idea worked out more clearly than in the religion of Israel; nowhere is it applied with such power to the condition of a people; nowhere has it so obviously moulded the life of a nation. In the study of the Old Testament you will be confronted again and again with the same kind of social problems which beset us at this day, and you will always find them solved in the name of religion. The scope of the solution may be limited, but the solution itself is derived from the relation of Israel to its God. And as you track the same ideas in other lands, you will find that the great social systems which have ruled men's lives for hundreds—nay, thousands of years—have held their ground, because they provided a synthesis of human knowledge and conduct through duty and faith. The attempts to explain the sources of ancient polities in the cunning of the few which imposed on the blindness of the many, have happily been cleared out of the way

by the new methods which the conception of evolution has placed in the student's hands. He knows now that priesthoods are established on something besides deception on the one part, and credulity on the other; and that government is more than a scramble of the strongest, masking itself under the forms of a transcendent order. In the ancient communities, therefore, in which religion was the vital force of the social organism, we shall discern an evidence not of its impotence or mischievous meddling then, but of the need for its inspiration now. The hope of the Kingdom will become clearer and stronger as we wind our way through the mazes of economic law and industrial development. The desire to labour for it will be converted from a vague wish, a loose idea, a hazy vision, into a distinct perception of some specific evil we can help to set right, some specific good which we could realise in no other way; and we shall learn that there is a significance of Divine teaching in the forms of society beneath which we live, even though it should require us to overthrow the old and to construct the new.

For it cannot be too often repeated that if there be a Providence, He must provide. The scene of that provision, so far as man is concerned, can lie only in his own history; and if the sum of human experience is dismissed as without worth, and the highest of human achievements be written down as folly, it will be in vain to give us back by supernatural revelation as to the future the truth which you have taken out of our history in the past; for we shall have no power by which to test it on its reception, or to understand it when it is received. Enter into the temple of the wide world's faith. Pass from the rude shrine of its coarsest homage to the sanctuary of holiest self-sacrifice; listen to the countless litanies in which the infinite variety of emotion and endeavour has poured itself forth since the world began; read in chamber after chamber the inscriptions

in which believers of all lands have declared their faith;—will you tell me then that they are only tales told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, and you must have a fresh revelation protected by independent guarantees? If the finger of heaven should write a new creed for us upon the walls, where is the prophet that can interpret it, and how shall we know that his interpretation is correct? In the vast cathedral of man's religion the parts of the mighty pile are not all alike. The earliest remains are clumsy and uncouth. In choir and transept there are inequalities of style. Buttress and arch sometimes interfere with one another, and meaningless monuments block up the view. Yet, as you climb from crypt to pinnacle and spire, you find that the builders have builded more wisely than they knew. Even the plan that was outgrown pointed the way to a nobler work. The ancient stones often serve new uses, and differences of detail minister to the unity of the whole. When you traverse its aisles and see the throng of worshippers that no man can number, ask them not too curiously in whose name they have come, but remember that in all ages Wisdom entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God and prophets. If the windows seem narrow and gloomy, forget not that, after all, it is one light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And should the accents of the preacher sound strange, be not impatient of the sermon: you are, perchance, listening to thoughts wrapt in an antique speech which have served in the life of the race to sustain the trusts—

> Which are the master-light of all our seeing,
> Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the Eternal Silence.

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